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The  
Soul's Rubāiyāt



-Amelia Woodward Truesdell.



## Fire altars

whence the sacred flame  
has fled;

Round them no more, the  
reverent feet shall tread.



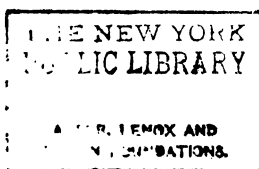
Ahurâ-Mazda,  
Persia's ancient god:  
What planets now revere  
his lifted rod?



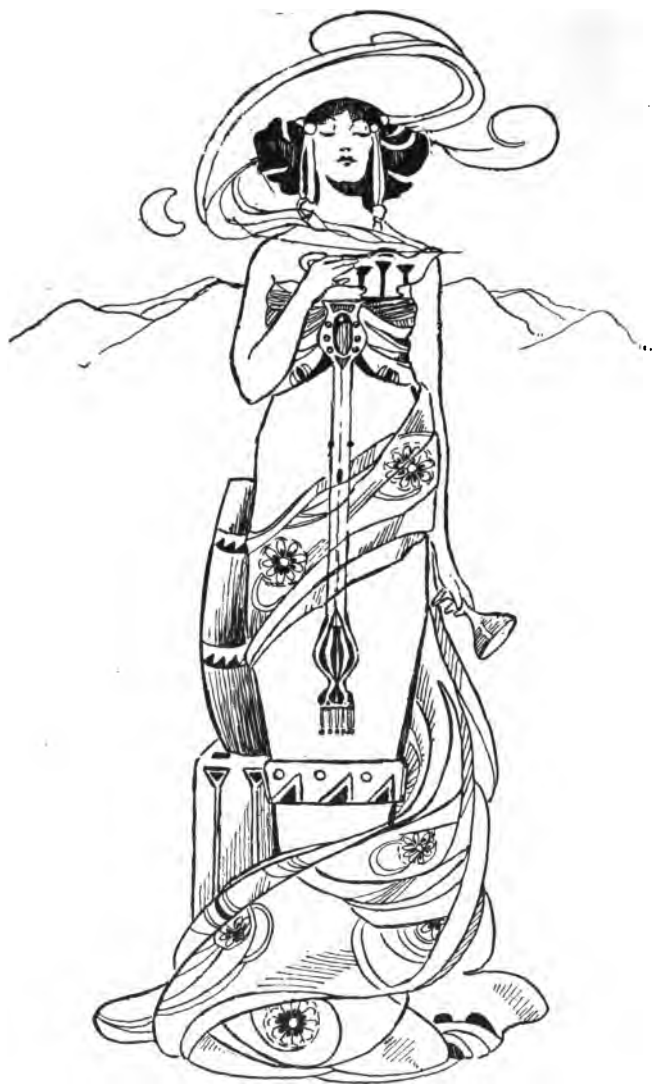


## **The Soul's Rubáiyát**









★ PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY.



# The Soul's Rubáiyát

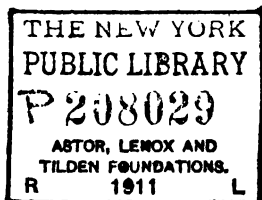
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## **The Soul's Rubáiyát**





*O Pars, awake! The humming-bird's  
a-wing;  
Still thrills the nightingale's sweet  
welcoming.  
Lo, from the hills—the Spring, her hair  
snow-splashed!  
Rose gardens burst to wildest  
blossoming.*

*But night owls hoot around Persepolis;  
Where jeweled feet have trod, the  
serpents hiss;  
To these dead halls there comes no  
Springtime bliss:  
My time-old search for truth is but as  
this.*

*This quest sung he who took the Vine  
to Spouse;  
Nay Pars, why from thy thousand  
dreams arouse?  
If dark thine ancient doors, where  
dwells the light?  
In Omar's harp, why wake despair's  
carouse?*





## **The Soul's Rubáiyát**

### **Part I**

#### **I**

Of him who walked a thousand years  
    ago  
In Persian vales, and studied human woe  
And the great Ruler's scheme to man, I  
    read  
And wondered if aught more to-day we  
    know;

Aught more, life's puzzle-riddle solve  
    than he;  
The Whence, the Why, the Whither, and  
    To-Be.  
We still are groping for the Great  
    Reply;  
Through veils and forms, O God, we  
    search for Thee.





## II

He taught beneath the rose-trees of Irán,  
This poet, seer, philosopher; this man  
Who spared not all his learning's  
treasure trove.  
But vain his wisdom of the star-writ  
plan!

Still would the multitude, like driven  
swine,  
On superstition feed, and call it wine  
Of life, though bitter with the creeds  
of men;  
For sleek Tradition cried, "A draught  
divine!"

## III

Tradition! Serpent-born at Eden's gate,  
Still deifying fetish, faith, and fate;  
On altars strange, his false lights  
burning yet,  
Still blind men's eyes unto their high  
estate.



Tradition! Keeper of the deadly keys  
Where souls are locked in darkness, fed  
on lees  
Of legends steeped in dreams, dank  
cloister weeds:  
O God, how could'st Thou look and  
suffer these?

#### IV

From wading in the muck of daily care,  
From 'midst the ashes of dead hopes'  
despair,  
Our souls still wait, with long endurance  
dull,  
And lifting helpless hands cry "Master,  
where?"

"A score of centuries since Jesus died,  
And Sin our daily comrade still?" we  
cried.  
His life! And could it be in vain?  
Then weep,  
Weep on thou mother of the Crucified!



V

I loved the high Ideal I called the Lord;  
I worshiped at that shrine with heart's  
accord.

Athwart the altar trailed a serpent Doubt,  
And left envenomed there the name of  
God.

With the Almighty would you make a  
trade,  
As with a huckster by the road-side  
paid?  
So much salvation for so much shed  
blood,  
And thus your own just penalty evade?

The soul revolts at such a sacrifice,  
Such banal temporizing with a vice;  
The sweetest life the world has ever  
known  
Is lost to earth for me—unworth the  
price?



Who then shall weigh the thing we call  
a sin?

For ages God mayhap to man has been  
More lenient than His sons. He knows  
so well

How weak He made him from without,  
—within.

## VI

All consecration knows the scourge: the  
scorn

Of words which cuts the heart as did  
the thorn

The Master's brow; and through a  
dolorous way

It mounts its calvary of crosses borne.

Vicarious ever is earth's pain; that pain,  
The life-sweat of one body's loss or  
gain.

None stands alone. Each hapless child  
of sin

Is linked to me. See that 'tis not in  
vain.



## VII

From Ark of the old faith my soul went  
out.

Philosophy she skimmed, that sea of  
doubt,—

But eddying circles in a darkening  
whirl,

Maelstrom of words! It was a sorry  
bout.

Where ancient Nilus and the Indus  
taught;

Confucius with his measured wisdom  
wrought,—

No foot-stay there, no olive-branch I  
found;

But wreckage of a flood of surging  
thought.

Through mosque and Buddhist temple,  
silence-shod,

To fires of old Irán and budding rod  
Of Aaron, back the devious way I trod;  
And lo! I found me many a Sphinx-like  
god.



But all their lips in silence were and  
scorn,  
At my poor search through shrines  
where ages gone  
Had left their manual of a bootless  
quest:  
For them, no star of some new faith  
unborn!

Altars and tombs showed man in tragic  
fray  
Of creeds, but still the slave of  
yesterday;  
His dread of change, slow death unto  
the faiths.  
Better a red-robed charlatan at play!

## VIII

And still the Potter's wheel is turned by  
Fate:  
He tosses out our shards of love and  
hate  
As whirls the clay about. We wonder why  
We hold such scraps and shreds for our  
estate.



Sharp-edgéd tools within an infant's hand!  
These passions which we did not  
understand  
Surprised us by their mastery. Then who  
Had right for us, such dangers to  
command?

Did Cain, that life was sacred  
comprehend?  
Then why distraught when he, without a  
friend,  
Went forth? Did Judas know his kiss  
of death  
Would mark *for him*, of heaven and  
earth the end?

## IX

For Truth I searched a hundred seas  
and lands;  
I heard his call and ran with  
outstretched hands;  
But when I thought I had his foot-  
steps traced,  
He just had gone to walk on other  
strands.



All up and down the streets and  
country roads,  
I asked for him. Men pointed to the  
loads  
Upon their backs and dumbly plodded on.  
These body needs—accurséd Eden goads!

X

Within the dark I heard a voice one  
night,  
And all the air was vibrant with the  
light,—  
Some thought that crashed its zigzag  
way; and then  
An Error's mocking laugh. The ribald  
wight!

I thought one day I'd caught his  
beckoning glance;  
Covered with light—Transfiguration's  
trance—  
I stood with souls in white. I raised my  
eyes,  
Then hope was naught but memory of a  
chance.





## XI

We read that Truth from one eternal  
place  
To us shall ever turn a changeless face,  
A phantom mirror in his hand forsooth;  
Of yesterday, to-day reflects no trace.

For Science changes every hour her  
schemes;  
Empiric! What to-day as fact she deems,  
Next year is refuse by the wayside flung;  
For souls in mortal need, what good are  
dreams?

## XII

I questioned Nature for some comfort-  
screed;  
For high analogies; God's word and  
deed  
Must blend in one great scheme of law.  
Quoth she  
"The individual is a worthless weed."



The specie life with its unbroken train  
Is Nature's god; and this for souls in  
pain?

As cold as death she reads her cruel  
creed:

"You're weak? Then pass; the  
strongest must remain."

### XIII

It is the old estate of me and thee;  
Dividual life lost in captivity  
Unto the whole. "What means the  
world to me?"

Thus Omar cried. The end? Earth  
waits to see.

Since his red wine a thousand years of  
work;  
Its bold results our logic may not shirk.  
But of God's mind to man,—the Unit-  
Soul?  
Says Nature's law, "Away with shrine  
and kirk."



#### XIV

O Truth! Bemasked with smirk of  
every race  
Thy brow! How shall we know thine  
alien face  
By strange device of old and new  
disguised?  
Yet souls distraught still seek thy  
dwelling-place.

We would believe thy hidden brow is  
bright,  
Immortal reflex of the Essence, Light.  
Why change thy raiment with the  
beggar Doubt,  
With all her shams and trumpery  
bedight?

Too faint thy image is in science' well  
Thy mark uncertain as the sagas tell.  
O Truth, tear off thy masks, and pray  
make haste,  
Or Doubt shall cast us into deepest hell.



## XV

O for Ithuriel's heaven-tempered spear!  
Some spirit talisman that's crystal-clear!  
Encased within this casket of dull clay,  
What chance has man the truth to know  
or hear?

Silent, Thou God, as Thy unanswering  
sky,  
Perhaps sometime, Thou'lt tell Thy  
creatures why  
The true and false are dual-unity.  
And now, have mercy if in sin we die.

## XVI

Since Death turned down the Persian's  
empty glass,  
The sun has seen the train of centuries  
pass;  
Uncertain-lipped, we question still the  
law,  
And still to us the heavens are as brass.



And when the past has swallowed up  
to-day,  
The future from us stolen nigh away,  
We feel the shiver of the river-brink,  
Ah, then forsooth we'll grovel,  
whining, pray!

Aye, pray to one we never have  
addressed;  
Reach for the cup our lips have passed  
unpressed;  
See heaven shrivel and shrink above our  
heads;  
Ye Moths!—my kin! Where shall we  
then, unblessed?

## XVII

My soul go hence! This strife is idle  
hum;  
This life the beating of an empty drum;  
A Holy Grail vanished is this Truth.  
Back to thy nothingness! Thou slave,  
be dumb.



And when again th' Eternal Sákis use  
This earthen bowl I found, but did not  
    choose,  
Still other bubbles in to pour, its clay  
The flavor of mortality may lose.

### XVIII

Will its new lips be only formed to  
    sigh?  
Our questions, will it face with dreary  
    eye?  
Nay, nay, I've wept its tears, this  
    beaten clay;  
For man will then have come the Great  
    Reply?

Beneath this star-splashed, zodiac-painted  
    bowl  
Down-pressed, we crawl with smothering  
    of soul;  
Is it uplifted for the Súfi seer  
Whose tragic songs to us through  
    centuries roll?



## XIX

Omar! Ah, do you yet the mystery  
know?

Is Death a Fakir with no wonder-show?  
Or have the Pleiads now no room for  
souls,

The I, the You, diffused in ether-flow?

Through space as winds Death's  
caravan its train,

Have you aught sweeter found than  
earth-love's pain?

Flesh-robe of sorrow must you wear  
again?

Why dream I, mad? All dreams for  
man are vain.



## **The Soul's Rubáiyát**

### **Part II**

#### **I**

The I, the Creature Man, unto my soul:  
"Would'st look within the Ruler's great  
Earth-Scroll?  
The folded centuries up-gather then;  
By History's torch new-lit, the tale  
unroll.

" 'Tis travail and the sweat of blood for  
thee;  
The fixed stars of belief reel drunkenly;  
*Thy* sun is blotted out; *thy* God  
eclipsed;  
Go find us life; this chaos strangles me.





## II

“Rugged the moutains round thy  
pathway close;  
From peak to peak, far-glittering with  
the snows  
Of Reason’s eyrie home. In what deep  
hell  
Beside thee Doubt, with torch inverted,  
goes.

“Through legend-vales thou’lt follow pale  
Despair;  
Doubt’s poisonous night-shade, but no  
hope-ray there.  
When plaints the ringdove for her Yúsuf  
lost,  
Thou soul, alone, wilt echo ‘Where, O  
where?’

“But oh! through stress, lose not thy  
God; no God?  
Rather I’d be again my native clod;  
Would set thee free from this earth-  
hampered flight.  
Make haste: I see too near the broken  
sod.



“Press on till bulbuls to the lark repeat  
Thy prayer, thine incense for the  
    heavenly seat;  
Till thou with morning’s messenger  
    canst sing  
‘ ’Tis there!’—red roses crushing at thy  
    feet.

### III

“Set up thine altar then, emblazoned  
    TRUTH,—  
The IN HOC SALUS of thy faith  
    forsooth;  
And thy libations pour, my heart’s best  
    wine;  
There sacrifice the treasures of my  
    youth.

“Thy JESUS HOMINUM SALVATOR  
    too,  
This shrine may prove,—those altar-  
    legends true;  
As from the dying seed new breath  
    suspires,  
From faith’s dead husks Christ-life may  
    spring anew.



#### IV

"Stand up before thine altar now and  
swear,  
Thou priestess Soul, that to our God  
Thou'lt bare  
Thy brow unto whatever name be true;  
Forgotten be the seal it used to wear.

"Thou'lt flinch not when old altars fall  
to naught.  
Theologies stripped to the quick of  
thought,  
And faiths, the sinews of thy life,  
inwrought  
With thy heart-threads, thou'lt give for  
freedom bought:

"'Tis spirit-vision with the single view,  
A talisman to test the false and true.  
No double thought; no judgment in  
reserve;  
Mammon or God; thou can'st not serve  
the two.



## V

"That thou wilt do all this for thee and  
me,

Swear it, as there is love 'twixt me and  
thee."

And as she passed, my heart wept bitterly:  
Yet 'tis man's only hope that thought  
be free.

But oh! the hurt when old beliefs are rent  
From lives by church-yard door-ways  
long content:

O dogmas sacred as the mother's breast!  
Make haste with healing lest the years  
be spent.

\* \* \* \* \*

## VI

She came. Her step scarce moved her  
vestments' fold.

The law was written in her lips' stern  
mould;

I cried aloud, "O my beloved speak."  
Far off her voice; her eyes were deep  
and old.



## VII

"Two graven tablets found I by the  
way:  
One chiseled by the Past, one by To-day:  
All faiths must read by these or else we  
say,  
'Perhaps the master-gravers were at  
play.'

"History and Science—friendly scribes,  
if reads  
The reader well; they mark man's  
changing needs.  
When Knowledge swings the world in  
line with law,  
She'll show God's purpose to the human  
needs.

"For individual lives, encrusted long  
In chrysalis of creeds, are with a song  
And spread of wings outbursting to the  
hope  
That Fear as fetish is a primal wrong.



## VIII

"These crowds that with a nation's  
vigor burned,  
Whose souls for truth of their Creator  
yearned;  
They sought a Christ but found  
Tradition's hell;  
What wonder if to God-distrust they  
turned?

"But sons of God, the seal is on them all;  
Not potsherds set in rows against the wall.  
With errors drugged, they stir as men  
in sleep;  
New life a-thrill, they would shake off  
the thrall."

## IX

"Yea soul, but veinings of a leaflet's plan  
Go read," I cried. "From it the Maker  
scan.  
The individual, what is *he* to God?  
O tragedy of him, the Unit-Man!"



X

And long I waited while she wandered  
—where?

\* \* \* \* \*

Far off I saw her, resurrection fair  
Of form; her face a glory from within;  
I knew she had with spirits swept the  
air.

“’Tis Love,” she cried. “A heart of  
love the key  
That opens now the one life-truth to  
thee;  
That God is love to man, and only love,  
To His own children whom He would  
make free.

“In lights sur’fine—the tints from  
desert sands—  
Beside me stood a man with piercéd  
hands,  
His brightness shaded by the mantling  
sun;  
His voice,—no sound so sweet on  
summer strands.



## XI

*"Man is not left alone upon the sod  
Of earth, his home, though often weary  
trod;  
God's amulet of love, within he bears;  
No heart that loves can ever lose its  
God.*

*"And when thou bearest to the river-  
brink  
Thy talisman of love, thou shalt not  
shrink;  
And there the Angel of eternal life  
'Shall lift her Cup o'er-flowed, and bid  
thee drink.'*

## XII

*"And he was gone. The Mother-Earth  
looked up,  
A twilight on her face; the hasty sup  
Of sweetness, fragrant on the desert air;  
Earth sighed for yet a cup—a brimming  
Cup.*



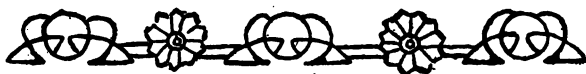


"A tender mantle of his thought to thee  
Fell on me as he passed. Love gives  
thee free  
Salvation from the 'Body of this death,'  
The world-old fetish, dread of God's  
decree.

### XIII

"Even as on Judea's mountain-side  
He spake. And then I knew with  
vision wide,  
Not lore occult nor dogmas complicate  
Made of the Nazarine, the Crucified.

"But patience meeting wrong with  
meekness mild;  
Simplicity with wisdom of a child;  
And charity's clean hand that cast no  
stone,  
And raised the weeping Mary, undefiled.



"It is the *spirit* of the Master's thought;  
Not deep developments, by scholars  
wrought  
Of doctrines that would shrivel on the lips  
Which 'Peace and good-will' from the  
manger brought.

"Spirit of love all human and divine;  
One chalice ruby with his heart's red  
wine,  
From lip to lip, the Rabbin then shall  
pass  
In mosque-cathedral-temple, one pure  
shrine.

#### XIV

"And there shall come a time of  
Pentecost  
To thee upon thy homeward way, but  
lost;  
When 'tongues of fire,' a spirit flame,  
the *truth*  
*For thee*, shall heal thy heart, sore  
question-tossed.



"Then life shall be an Olivet of peace,  
And from its height thy vision shall  
increase  
To unknown kingdoms of His love and  
joy,  
Till doubts like waves on a dead sea  
shall cease.

"Be it Love's Zion-heights immortalized,  
Be it Gethsemanes pain-solemnized,  
Be it the cross of life-hopes sacrificed,  
Thine eyes shall see the fields  
emparadised."

## XV

She ceased. And from her eyes'  
uplifted sight  
A splendor filled the deepness of the  
night:  
Oh, mantle of the hope that covered me!  
O Truth, the glory of that desert light!



## XVI

"Accept defeat as to Creation's plan,"  
I cried. "There is no other peace for  
man.

The *De Profundis* of a life is this,—  
Would god be God if I His will could  
scan?

"Now in the sun I set the bowl to-day:  
What matter be it brazen bowl or clay?  
It gathered up the light of yesterday;  
To-morrow it shall draw a brighter ray.

## XVII

"Once Ramoth scoffed and clashed the  
heavenly keys;  
One door defied his hand. 'What then  
are these?  
Insult from Him?' he cried. Then  
Astrofel,  
'The mystery of His Godhead would'st  
thou seize?'



"So I, the Self, this terror-stricken lord  
Of earth who is afraid to meet his God,  
Upon th' Eternal Sword would lay a  
hand,  
And would compel th' Almighty's final  
Word.

### XVIII

"Forever vanished now the great  
god Fear;  
Released his captives, to the daylight-  
cheer.  
Gone too, the little gods of fretting  
creeds;  
But Love remains and God is there—is  
here.

"I see men perjured, mad with lust of  
fame;  
I see them reeking with the gutter's  
shame.  
Behold! they rise and call upon God's  
name;  
For Fear lives not, but Love with eyes  
of flame."



## XIX

O Love, our refuge in earth's wildest  
storm!

O Service, life-breath of a heart that's  
warm!

A dual-unity, of heaven born;  
For love is service in its highest form.

Flame-tints that shimmer on the desert  
air!

Love-lights that make Life's sands a  
garden fair,

Where joy and pain sing softly to the  
soul

That God in man is Love in human  
care.



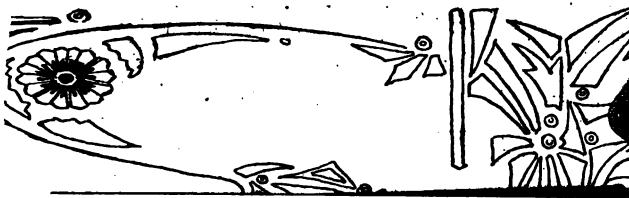












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